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THE NEW YORK TIMES, S

## New Soviet Afghan Bases Seen as Peril to Gulf

By RICHARD HALLORAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 13 — United States military analysts and Middle Eastern diplomats say the Soviet Union has nearly completed six airfields in southern Afghanistan that will put the Persian Gulf within range of Soviet jet fighters.

The officials said the airfield construction underscored a vitally important addition to the mission of Soviet forces in Afghanistan. When the Soviet Union intervened militarily in 1979, Soviet diplomats here said the move was intended only to insure the survival

of an Afghan Government amenable to Moscow.

Today, United States officials said, the Soviet Union appears intent on turning Afghanistan into a forward base for Soviet military forces, particularly air force units, on the eastern flank of the oilfields around the Persian Gulf.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. John W. Vessey Jr., told reporters on Friday that the United States would watch Soviet moves in Afghanistan "for the first indication of a change in Soviet policy" under the new Soviet leader, Yuri V. Andropov.

He said a withdrawal of the 100,000 Soviet troops from Afghanistan "would

certainly be a good sign for them to make to the rest of the world."

But General Vessey said the Soviet Union had given every indication that the nature of the intervention in Afghanistan had changed and that Soviet forces were settling in for a long occupation.

The general did not mention the new Soviet airfields. But other officials and diplomats said the bases would present at least two new dangers.

One would be a threat from Soviet fighter-bombers to the oilfields and shipping installations around the Persian Gulf and to oil tankers passing

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from the gulf through the Strait of Hormuz into the Arabian Sea.

The second would be to create more problems for the Rapid Deployment Force that is scheduled to become a full-fledged, unified military command on Jan. 1.

Until recently the force has concentrated on plans for blocking a possible Soviet invasion from the north. Now it must take into account a new danger from the east.

In time of conflict, fighters and fighter-bombers from the dispersed Soviet airfields in Afghanistan would constitute a new threat to United States air, sea, and ground operations. Countering that threat would probably take more air wings than the 10 currently planned.

The United States has no air bases in that region, and prospects for gaining

access to any are limited, officials said. The Navy now has an aircraft carrier in the Indian Ocean with up to 100 planes aboard. In a crisis, two more carriers would probably be deployed.

The Reagan Administration has given high priority to gaining access to air bases in Turkey, an American ally in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and recently reached an agreement under which the United States would improve about 10 bases and have access to them for training.

Military planners have said they hope American warplanes will be able to use those bases to fly interdiction missions against Soviet forces in the event of an invasion of Iran. But they have acknowledged that the Turkish Government has shown little enthusiasm for the proposal.

The planners have also indicated they hope Saudi Arabia or Oman will permit American aircraft to use bases in those countries in time of conflict, but they acknowledge much resistance to the idea by the two Government.

An early indication of the Soviet military expansion in Afghanistan came last July from an insurgent Afghan leader, Hassan Gailani, of the National Islamic Front, who said the Soviet Union has begun building an airbase in Shindand, in western Afghanistan.

Mr. Gailani also reported that Soviet forces had enlarged the storage depot at their base in Kandahar in southern Afghanistan. The new bases, which officials here would not pinpoint, were said to be strung out mostly between Kandahar and Shindand.